

4 THOUGHTS OF TODAY'S TEENS

THIS FEELS GREAT.

It really doesn't matter what I'm doing as long as I am doing it with my friends. I love it when we have something huge to do—something that really rocks. But I also like just hanging out with them. The other day, I spent the night with my two best friends talking about girls, about the future, and about God. I used to go to this church where I didn't have any friends. The youth minister was great, and I liked the worship, but it just didn't feel right. The church I go to now is amazing. The worship isn't as good, but my friends are there.

Research says: 50% of a teenager's five closest friends share their religious beliefs. (Christian Smith, *Soul Searching*, 57).

REBELS! MAYBE NOT ME

It may surprise you, but I pretty much agree with my parents on religion. I mean, some people may be searching for spiritual truth, but that's not really me. What do I believe? That's hard to put into words. I just know how I feel about God and stuff. Going to church with my parents is cool...well, unless I have to work or something. I'm just not too worried about it.

Research says: "The single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents." (Christian Smith, *Soul Searching*, 261).

I'M OUTTA HERE!

I hate to tell you this, but I'm probably going to disappear in a few years. I really love the youth group. It's been great for the last four and a half years. Friends, trips and concerts. I'll never forget the mission trip last summer. But I'm gonna be a senior next year, and my schedule is getting packed. With school, soccer, and work, I just don't have a lot of time for church. Besides, I'll be leaving after next year. In 16 months I'll be living in a college dorm. Can you believe it? I hear college fun never stops . . .

Research says: From high school graduation to age 25, weekly church attendance drops 42%. It declines 58% from age 18 to age 29. (Barna, 2003)

HOW CAN I BE SURE?

I know what I believe—at least, I know what feels right for me. But, I really don't know that I would say what I believe is true. It's true for me, but everyone has to find what works for them, right? I know this girl who is Buddhist. I don't want to convert her or anything, but I think her religion is cool. It's what defines her. I might invite her to church, but if she felt like I was saying, "I'm right and you're wrong," I don't think we'd be friends anymore. I think you just have to accept people for who they are.

Research says: It's a normal part of American youth culture for teenagers to be open to anything that comes along and not too committed to any particular absolute.